

The Outcomes and Alternatives Phase

Careful planning will save you some heartache. You should have addressed the things we talked about earlier. This phase will discuss what happens with an unsuccessful election and what happens when you win.

Whether you win or lose, remember that you are trying to improve your community. Change isn't easy, and sometimes it takes more than one attempt to succeed. Before leaving you with final comments, consider the following quote:

"What is a community without a thriving, fully functioning public library? It's a pretty desolate, barren, totally uncool place to be." — Columnist Dawn Turner Trice on the importance of voting in local library referenda, Chicago Tribune, March 31, 2004.

Remember our communities need quality library service. We provide a place for people to learn and grow.

Contingency Plans

There are two possible results of an election, winning and losing. Keep in mind; many wonderful projects have ended with an unsuccessful election. Sometimes even when you do everything right, other issues cause you to lose. Perhaps there was an unpopular item on the ballot that influenced the voter's decision; maybe your supporters didn't get out to vote. The educational effort involved in districting may require a couple of unsuccessful elections before you succeed. Because failure is a possibility, take time to decide how to handle a lost election.

Realize that you and others in the districting effort will feel anger, discouragement, and disappointment. This will not be a good time to make decisions. This is why you need to make contingency plans.

Finding Alternatives. The election failure leaves the issues that originally created an interest in districting. You have three options:

1. to try again.
2. to try another alternative.
3. to let the issue rest for a time.

Carry out the following tasks to determine what is the best of these three alternatives:

- O1. Analyze the election campaign and results
- O2. Re-examine districting alternatives based on the analysis
- O3. Proceed with an alternative

Task O One: Analyze the Election Campaign and Results.

Analyzing the election campaign and results is an important task. Analyzing a campaign will help you decide upon what action you should take after a failed election. Don't assess blame. Instead use the knowledge that you have now to do things differently next time around. Look at the precinct-by-precinct report of the election results. Are there areas where the vote was strong? Areas where it was weak? Were there any surprises? Were there areas where

you expected strong support, but didn't see that materialize? Was there strong opposition in some parts of the proposed district? Try to understand the reasons behind the answers you receive.

As a group talk about the election. Here are some general questions you can ask yourself:

- ♦ Were there turning points in the election process — events that had a negative effect on the outcome? Could those events have been avoided and how?

- ♦ If the election was very close, what effect might another election have? Can you change the situation enough to make a difference in the outcome? Would another election soon after this election cause a backlash among voters?

Task O Two: Re-examine Alternatives.

Re-examine all the alternatives in light of the election results.

- If the election was extremely close and it appears that corrective measures could change the results, you may want to try again.
- If the districting measure was strongly opposed in one geographic area, but supported in others, redraw the district lines. This may create a district where there is support.
- If the election results were overwhelmingly opposed to the district, you may want to wait.

Task O Three: Proceeding.

Proceed with a new course of action, once you have analyzed the campaign and results. Disband the group, if you choose to wait until later.

If you want to try another election, return to the Planning Phase.

Make the necessary changes in the dates and procedures to be used. Think about how to market the proposal and make it acceptable to the electorate. Pay attention to the arguments opponents made against the district and take corrective action.

If a change in library district boundaries is chosen, return to the Assessment Phase and re-examine the issues that have been raised. Review the first attempt at districting and make necessary modifications to the new proposed district.